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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 05 DOHA 000722

SIPDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR LEBARON FOR AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF
GENERAL NORTON SCHWARTZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [QA](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF SCHWARTZ'
VISIT TO QATAR

REF: DOHA 664

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron, for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

FOR AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF, GENERAL NORTON SCHWARTZ, FROM
AMBASSADOR LEBARON

¶1. (C) General Schwartz, Embassy Doha welcomes your visit to Qatar. We have requested office calls for you with the Heir Apparent, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, the Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces, Major General Hamad bin Ali Al-Attiyeh, and the Commander of the Qatar Emiri Air Forces, Brigadier General (Pilot) Mubarak Mohammed Al-Khayarin. We expect all will agree to see you, subject to their availability. You last visited Qatar in April 2008 as Transcom Commander, and met at that time with MG Al-Attiyeh. Secretary Donley met with MG Al-Attiyeh earlier this month.

¶2. (C) Here we provide the Country Team's views on how your visit can best advance the U.S. Government's strategic objectives in Qatar. We also discuss the key strategic trends in the bilateral relationship over the coming three years. We start, however, with a brief review of the bilateral relationship.

THE U.S.-QATAR RELATIONSHIP

¶3. (C) The breadth and depth of Qatar's relationship with the U.S. is impressive, especially for a small country the size of Connecticut, with only 1.7 million inhabitants, of whom only about 225,000 are actually Qatari citizens.

-- The U.S.-Qatar military relationship is, of course, extremely important. Qatar provides the U.S. military exceptional access to two major Qatari military installations, Al Udaid Air Base and Camp As-Saliyeh - perhaps CENTCOM's most important operating installations outside of Iraq. Qatar charges us no rent, and in fact is funding over \$700 million in construction projects for the exclusive use of the U.S. military.

-- Until recently, the U.S. had never made a major defense sale to Qatar. In July, however, Qatar signed contracts with Boeing for two C-17s with an option for two more, and with Lockheed-Martin for four C-130Js with an option for two more. The C-17 and C-130 sales are a signal the Qataris are beginning to invest in their own defensive capabilities - with a preference for U.S.-origin equipment.

-- The broader economic relationship between Qatar and the

United States is vital. U.S. energy companies have invested tens of billions of dollars in the oil and gas industry here. Qatar, which holds the third largest natural gas reserves in the world after Iran and Russia, is expected to become in 2009 one of the most important suppliers of imported liquefied natural gas to the U.S. market.

-- Because it is so small and its energy resources so large, Qatar now has an annual per capita income of over \$60,000. Even with the current global financial crisis, Qatar's national revenues will continue growing, and Qatar should soon have the highest per capita income in the world.

-- Vast wealth has bolstered the country's political ambitions, leading to Qatari foreign policy initiatives that have too often been at odds with U.S. objectives. Examples include Qatar's relations with Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria, and Sudan.

-- Qatar's location, wide-ranging foreign relations, fast-growing economy, and expanding transportation links have made counterterrorism cooperation, including counterterrorist financing, a key aspect of our relationship. Qatar's wealth, in particular, means its citizens are potential sources of money for violent extremists and cooperative efforts to target and prevent these financial flows are central to our bilateral agenda.

-- Qatar has committed itself like few other Arab states to modernizing its educational system, and has turned decisively to the United States for help. Qatar has imported branch

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campuses of six U.S. universities, including Texas A&M, Carnegie-Mellon, Weill-Cornell Medical School, Georgetown, Virginia Commonwealth, and Northwestern. It is instituting a U.S. model of charter schools at the elementary and secondary levels.

THE MILITARY RELATIONSHIP: KEY TRENDS THROUGH 2011

14. (S) Following are the key trends over the next three years that we believe will have the greatest impact on our military relationship:

-- Qatar will continue to modernize its military through the purchase of U.S. weapons systems, though competition will continue from the French, British, and others. Despite Qatar's wealth, defense purchases will be made in the context of a frugal military budget. Economic development will remain Qatar's top spending priority.

-- Qatar will continue to face a formidable challenge staffing its military with Qataris because there are so few Qataris and because more attractive salaries exist in the private sector. The continued dependence on foreign nationals, particularly in the enlisted ranks, will continue to present concerns about transfers of sensitive U.S. technology.

-- The Qatari leadership will seek to increase the prestige of its military within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the international arena, but has no clearly defined strategy for doing so. Likewise, Qatar is attracted to the latest military systems, even while its military modernization is not guided by a national security strategy, at least not one we're aware of.

-- Qatar's defense purchases are currently misaligned with the maritime threats to its critical economic infrastructure and the ballistic missile threats it faces from Iran. But Qatar's recent C-130 and C-17 aircraft purchases do align with its desire to carve out a niche in the region and internationally for humanitarian relief and disaster

response. This trend will continue.

-- In the short term, irritating customs and immigration issues stemming from Qatar's need to demonstrate sovereignty over Al Udaid Air Base will continue to plague the mil-mil relationship.

-- We expect that the biggest factor in our engagement in the near term will be Qatar's sensitivity to the large, enduring U.S. military presence. While Qatar's leadership and population regard our presence as a permanent and necessary deterrent to the aggression of surrounding states, principally Iran and Saudi Arabia, it does expose it to regional criticism and, potentially, to terrorist attack.

-- We expect, therefore, that Qatar will continue to pursue a policy of strengthening and deepening the military relationship through increased combined planning, training, exercises, and operations - along the lines of the relationship that exists between the U.S. Forces in Korea and the Republic of Korea Armed Forces.

HOW YOUR VISIT CAN HELP THESE STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT GOALS

¶5. (C) Defense sales and other elements of security assistance and cooperation are aimed at strengthening our long-term military and economic relationship. The Government of Qatar's efforts to modernize the Qatar Armed Forces, to include airlift, critical economic infrastructure protection, and missile defense, are in line with USG objectives to strengthen regional partners and enhance regional security.

¶6. (C) Embassy Doha is working to synchronize activities across the interagency in an effort to support execution of USG policy, plans and programs. As we work to deepen and expand our strategic, operational and tactical cooperation with the Government of Qatar, we see your visit as a tool to further these shared, strategic, goals. Here's how your

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visit can help:

¶7. (S) URGING QATAR TOWARD DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: The trends identified above suggest a strong Qatari imperative for Qatar to develop an overarching national security strategy, guiding its military development, defense purchases, cooperation with the U.S. and other allies. The U.S. has a strong interest in working with Qatar on that, ensuring to the extent possible, that their national security strategy is consistent with, and supportive of, our own. Given both your current position as CSAF and your previous position commanding Transcom, you are well placed to urge the Qatari leadership in this direction and help them understand the importance of developing a broad and detailed strategy into which their current defense acquisitions fit.

¶8. (C) PRAISING DEFENSE SALES: You should compliment Qatar for signing contracts with Boeing in July for two C-17s (with an option for two more) and with Lockheed-Martin for four C-130Js (also with an option for two more) and encourage the Qataris to continue down this path. Boeing anticipates initial delivery of the first C-17 in August-September 2009. Boeing and SAF/IA will meet 21-23 October with the QEAF Transport Committee to advise that delivery may slip to the right.

-- The C-17 and C-130 sales (both hybrid DCS-FMS cases) are a signal the Qataris are beginning to invest in their own defense capabilities, especially in the area of humanitarian relief. Qatar is also looking at U.S. helicopters and Hellfire II missiles as part of its National Security Shield effort, and possibly F-16 or F-18 fighter aircraft as well as an integrated air defense system.

¶9. (S) PROVIDING A RESPONSE ON LAIRCM: Qatar looks to the USG for a response to their long-standing request to install Large Aircraft Infrared Counter Measures (LAIRCM) on five dedicated aircraft used by the Amir, his wife, the Heir Apparent, and the Prime Minister.

-- Qatar originally requested the system in September 2003, over five years ago. The system was offered to Qatar in April 2004 but the offer was canceled in December. It is our understanding that USAF release policy for the system changed, making Qatar ineligible.

-- DSCA is currently unwilling to engage Qatar on the acquisition of LAIRCM. DSCA's initial concern was that the Amir's aircraft was not exclusively his; in fact, it is. Another concern involves maintenance - only citizens of certain countries are allowed to maintain the system, so this issue would also have to be addressed.

-- It may be that the U.S. is reluctant to release this technology to Qatar, but this has never been officially articulated. The lack of response troubles the Qataris, who perceive a real need to protect the Amir and their senior leadership from potential threats -- which are more pronounced in their view due to the U.S. military presence in country.

-- Your giving Qatari officials feedback on the request would mark a positive step forward. You should acknowledge to MG Al-Attiyah that Qatar has submitted a request for the installation of LAIRCM on five aircraft used by senior Qatari officials and offer to look into the request and provide a response.

¶10. (S) GETTING THE PATRIOT MISSILES BACK ON THE RAILS: Patriots were deployed to Qatar in fall 2006 to support the 15th Asian Games in Doha. Protection was primarily for U.S. Forces at Al Udaid and Camp As Sayliyah, but also covered a large portion of Doha and some (not all) critical infrastructure. On October 15, 2007, a routine test sequence resulted in the accidental launch of a Patriot Missile from a battery at Camp As-Saylieh. The missile landed on the Qatari COS' farm a few kilometers from Camp As-Saylieh, with no injuries or property damage. U.S.-Qatari cooperation on the investigation was good and the Qataris appreciated that ADM Fallon responded quickly to their request to stand both batteries down and physically remove missiles from the launchers.

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-- The Qataris originally signaled that they would agree to putting the Patriot batteries back up, but first asked for the full report on the incident, temporary rules of engagement, and an analysis of the Patriots' coverage area to ensure that the city of Doha is covered and not just the military bases.

-- Completion of the final report took longer than expected, but has since been briefed to senior Qatari military officers. In early September, however, we were informed that the Government of Qatar seeks to establish strategic-level rules of engagement (as opposed to tactical procedures) on exactly when, where, and how the Patriots may be used.

-- LTG Dempsey and LTG North engaged MG Al-Attiyah personally for redeployment of Patriots, but to no avail. CENTCOM and AFCENT are aware of the rules-of-engagement request and are concerned about the ramifications and precedence set by entering into such discussions. We believe that the delay in the return to operational status likely boils down to Qatari sovereignty concerns and, perhaps, a GOQ desire for some form of role in granting permission or approval prior to firing missiles.

-- Meanwhile, Qatar is aggressively pursuing FMS information

on an integrated air defense system which includes, among other systems, Patriot-PAC 3. Additionally, Qatar is aware that its neighbors Bahrain and UAE are in the process of receiving one each Patriot battery as part of an enhanced air defense posture for U.S. Forces in the region.

-- You should encourage Sheikh Tamim to authorize us to put the Patriots back on rails, as the final decision is likely his. Preliminary discussions with CENTCOM air defenders suggest an opportunity to deploy a second Patriot battery to Qatar. Offering the second battery to cover what Qatar considers to be of strategic importance may be just the right bargaining chip to get permission to put the first battery back on-line. We hope to have an answer on the viability of this option before your arrival.

-- Continuation of the current situation, however, is lose-lose for both U.S. and Qatar in terms of security. If Sheikh Tamim's answer is that we need bilateral discussions on strategic-level rules of engagement before doing so, the Embassy will coordinate on next steps with CENTCOM.

¶11. (C) APPRECIATION OF EFFORTS TO ADD SECOND RUNWAY AT AL UDAID: You should thank Sheikh Tamim and MG Al-Attiyah for their ongoing efforts to secure Qatari financing for this expansion.

-- AFCENT has long wanted Qatar to build a second runway at Al Udaid something the Qataris had long resisted. In March, the Qataris agreed to build it and, apparently, pay for it. This demonstrates QAF commitment to accommodate U.S. presence in light of their own increased airlift footprint at Al Udaid.

-- A final decision for payment currently rests with the Ministry of Finance. MG Al-Attiyah expects positive resolution in the near future. But despite an apparent lack of response from the Ministry of Finance thus far, all indications are that construction of the second runway is progressing rapidly.

¶12. (C) ENCOURAGE RESOLUTION OF ONGOING CUSTOMS ISSUES: You should note U.S. understanding that military facilities provided for U.S. use in Qatar are sovereign Qatari territory, and in this context express our desire to resolve customs problems that plague our overall bilateral strategic defense relationship.

-- Customs problems continue to plague our working-level engagement with the Qatari Armed Forces. There have been numerous incidents in which Coalition personnel violated established Qatar customs procedures on entry or exit from the country, leading to Qatari accusations that U.S. personnel are not respecting Qatari sovereignty. These led Qatar, in March 2007, to implement troublesome new customs procedures for personnel, equipment, and cargo entering or transiting the country.

-- CENTCOM J5, AFCENT, ASG-Qatar and OMC Qatar personnel held
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discussions with the Qatari Armed Forces in June and November 2007 and March 2008, which led to agreement on temporary procedures. Only constant, daily OMC Qatar and AFCENT interaction with the Qatar Armed Forces GHQ and Customs and Ports Authority officials prevent detrimental effects to U.S. operations.

-- These tactical-level irritants will be exacerbated as we shift operational focus to efforts in Afghanistan, and will lead to delays in intra-theater cargo movement thus degrading our operational capabilities. Continued degradation of this type will continue to erode our once strong strategic mil-to-mil relationship.

-- We regard the temporary procedures as a stepping stone for permanent procedures that respect U.S. and Qatar sovereignty,

support U.S. operations and are in line with the Defense Cooperation Agreement. But in the meantime, some goodwill from the Qatari side would go a long way toward easing U.S. military operations in Qatar.

LeBaron